

Eyewitness Testimony to the Genocide of European Jewry

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Inevitably when anyone questions the genocide of European Jewry, eyewitness testimony is raised as proof that the genocide happened. This article shows that the eyewitness accounts of the Holocaust story have proved to be extremely unreliable and ineffective in proving its validity.

Trial Testimony

John Demjanjuk, a naturalized American citizen, was accused by eyewitnesses of being a murderous guard at Treblinka nicknamed Ivan the Terrible. Demjanjuk was deported to Israel, and an Israeli court tried and convicted him primarily based on the eyewitness testimony of five Jewish survivors of Treblinka. Demjanjuk's defense attorney eventually uncovered new evidence proving that the Soviet KGB had framed Demjanjuk using forged documents inaccurately portraying him as a guard at Treblinka. The Israeli Supreme Court ruled that the eyewitness accounts were not credible and that Demjanjuk thus was not guilty.[\[1\]](#)

Another example of false witness testimony of the so-called Holocaust occurred in the case of Frank Walus, who was a retired Chicago factory worker charged with killing Jews in his native Poland during World War II. An accusation by Simon Wiesenthal that Walus had worked for the Gestapo prompted the U.S. government's legal action. Eleven Jews testified under oath during Walus's trial that Walus had murdered Jews during the war. After a costly four-year legal battle, Walus was finally able to prove that he had spent the war years as a teenager working on German farms. An American Bar Association article published in 1981 concluded in regard to Walus's trial that "...in an atmosphere of hatred and loathing verging on hysteria, the government persecuted an innocent man."[\[2\]](#)

Many of the most-outlandish eyewitness claims have been quietly dropped by defenders of the Holocaust story. For example, it was claimed at the Nuremberg trials that the Germans made soap from the bodies of Jews. The judges at Nuremberg stated in their verdict that "in some instances attempts were made to utilize the fat from the bodies of the victims in the commercial manufacture of soap."[\[3\]](#) In April 1990, officials at Israel's Yad Vashem Holocaust Center admitted that the human-soap stories were not true. Yad Vashem Archives Director Shmuel Krakowski said: "Historians have concluded that soap was not made from human fat. When so many people deny that the Holocaust ever happened, why give them something to use against the truth?"[\[4\]](#)

The Buchenwald trial, which opened at Dachau on April 11, 1947, presented evidence that lampshades had been made from human skin. Kurte Sitte, a 36-year-old doctor of physics, had been a prisoner in Buchenwald from September 1939 until its liberation. When asked if a lampshade delivered to Ilse Koch was made of tattooed human skin, she replied: "Yes, sir, it was." Former Buchenwald inmate Kurt Froboess was asked if he had seen Ilse Koch with any tattooed skin in her possession. Froboess replied: "Yes. I saw a photo album. The cover had a tattoo on it. And on one occasion she was seen wearing gloves. They were a whitish-yellow color, and a star was tattooed on the back side of the left glove."[\[5\]](#)

These and other eyewitness stories of lampshades being made from human skin have been quietly dropped by supporters of the Holocaust story. Gen. Lucius Clay, military governor of the American Zone of occupied Germany, stated with regard to the case of Ilse Koch, "There is no convincing evidence that

she selected inmates for extermination in order to secure tattooed skins or that she possessed any articles made of human skin.” [6] Years later in an interview about the material used in the lampshades, Gen. Clay stated: “Well, it turned out actually that it was goat flesh. But at the trial it was human flesh. It was almost impossible for her to have gotten a fair trial.” [7]

Eyewitness testimony at the 1985 Ernst Zündel trial in Toronto also proved to be unreliable. Arnold Friedman, a 56-year-old Hungarian Jew, was touted as an eyewitness to the homicidal gassings at Auschwitz. Friedman testified that while in Auschwitz he saw “fourteen-foot flames” shooting out of the crematorium chimneys. Douglas Christie, Zündel’s defense attorney, showed Friedman scientific evidence that the crematoria at Auschwitz were designed not to give off either smoke, flames, ashes or odors. Friedman eventually agreed with Christie that he might not have witnessed Jews being burned in the crematoria buildings at Auschwitz. [8]

Rudolf Vrba, who had escaped from Auschwitz in April of 1944, was a world-famous eyewitness to the homicidal gas chambers at Auschwitz. Vrba confessed during his testimony at Zündel’s trial that his book *I Cannot Forgive* was “an artistic picture...not a document for the court.” Vrba testified that he had never actually witnessed anybody being gassed at Auschwitz, but had merely heard rumors. Furthermore, Vrba admitted that his written and pictorial descriptions of the Auschwitz crematory were mere guesswork, based on “what I heard it might look like.” Vrba proved to be an unreliable witness who could only cite hearsay evidence of the so-called Holocaust. [9]

Another prosecution witness at this trial was Dennis Urstein, who claimed he saw bodies hauled out of the gas chamber at Auschwitz. Urstein described the bodies as “greyish-greenish” in color. However, persons who have died from Zyklon-B poisoning turn a bright cherry-red color. Urstein also claimed that he wore no protective clothing when assisting with the disposal of bodies in the gas chamber. If this had been the case, he would very soon have died as well. Urstein was exposed by Douglas Christie as a totally unreliable witness. [10]

Henry Leader was another witness at this trial who got the body color of the alleged Zyklon-B gas victims wrong. Leader said the color of the gassing victims was blue. [11] The failure of Jewish eyewitnesses to give credible testimony at the 1985 Ernst Zündel trial caused Alan Dershowitz to write that the trial was “a total victory for Holocaust deniers and a total disaster for Holocaust survivors and the Jewish people.” [12]

Three Famous Jewish Survivors

It would be impossible to discuss every eyewitness account of the Holocaust story. To illustrate the unreliability of eyewitness accounts of the so-called Holocaust, I will analyze the eyewitness accounts of probably its three most-famous survivors: Elie Wiesel, Simon Wiesenthal and Viktor Frankl.

Elie Wiesel, whose memoir *Night*, published in 1958, helped him win the Nobel Peace Prize, never mentioned homicidal gas chambers in his book. Instead, Wiesel wrote that Jews were killed en masse by being thrown alive into burning pits. [13] If there had actually been homicidal gas chambers at Birkenau, one would think that Wiesel would have mentioned the gas chambers in his autobiography. Also, if there had been burning pits at Birkenau, these would have shown up in some of the Allied aerial photographs taken of Birkenau in 1944, around the time he said he saw them.

Wiesel also mentions in *Night* that he had surgery on an infected foot in January 1945. The German authorities at Birkenau gave Wiesel and other hospital patients unfit to travel the option to remain in the camp. Wiesel and his father decided to evacuate Birkenau and travel to Buchenwald with the Germans rather than be liberated by the Russian army.^[14] If Birkenau had been a place of mass exterminations, why would Wiesel choose to travel with his supposed killers? Also, why would the German authorities at Birkenau leave behind thousands of witnesses to their genocide if a policy of genocide had actually taken place at Birkenau?

That Wiesel survived his internment at Buchenwald is, of course, the result of a miracle. Wiesel said: “In Buchenwald they sent 10,000 persons to their deaths each day. I was always in the last hundred near the gate. They stopped. Why?”^[15] Today no reputable historian believes that 10,000 Jews per day were executed at Buchenwald.

A remarkable witness himself, Wiesel assured us that he had met other remarkable witnesses. Wiesel stated in one of his books that after Jews were executed at Babi Yar in Ukraine: “Eye witnesses say that for months after the killings the ground continued to spurt geysers of blood. One was always treading on corpses.”^[16] Wiesel later repeated this claim with some embellishment: “Later, I learn from a witness that, for month after month, the ground never stopped trembling; and that, from time to time, geysers of blood spurted from it.”^[17] This story lacks all credibility. Wiesel does not seem to know that photos taken at Babi Yar shortly after the alleged mass executions of Jews show no indication of any mass grave site or any disturbance of the foliage or ground cover.^[18]

Famed Nazi-hunter Simon Wiesenthal also reported a trip to a German camp hospital in his book *The Murderers Among Us*. Wiesenthal wrote that he tried to commit suicide by cutting his wrists while incarcerated by the Germans. Instead of letting him die, the Germans sent him to the hospital where they nursed him back to health.^[19] If the Germans were intent on committing genocide against European Jewry, why would they make the effort to send both Wiesel and Wiesenthal to the hospital to restore their health?

Viktor Frankl’s book *Man’s Search for Meaning* has been ranked by the Library of Congress as one of the 20th century’s 10 most influential books in the United States. Frankl described his experiences at Auschwitz in this book as if he had spent many months there. In reality, Frankl was in Auschwitz only for a few days in October 1944 while in transit from Theresienstadt to a sub-camp of Dachau. Frankl admitted this to the American evangelist Robert Schuller: “I was in Auschwitz only three or four days...I was sent to a barrack and we were all transported to a camp in Bavaria.”^[20] Frankl’s short time in Auschwitz is substantiated by the prisoner log from the sub-camp of Dachau, Kaufering III, which listed Frankl’s arrival on October 25, 1944, six days after his departure from Theresienstadt.^[21] Thus, Frankl’s descriptions of his long stay at Auschwitz in *Man’s Search for Meaning* are false and misleading.

Additional Evidence

The unreliability of eyewitness testimony of the Holocaust story has been commented on by some historians. Jewish historian Samuel Gringauz criticized what he called the “hyperhistorical” nature of most Jewish survivor testimony. Gringauz wrote that “most of the memoirs and reports are full of preposterous verbosity, graphomaniac exaggeration, dramatic effects, overestimated self-inflation, dilettante philosophizing, would-be lyricism, unchecked rumors, bias, partisan attacks and apologies.”^[22]

Shmuel Krakowski, archives director of Israel's Yad Vashem Holocaust center, confirmed in 1986 that more than half of the testimonies of Jewish survivors on file there are unreliable. Krakowski said that many survivors, wanting to be a part of history, may have let their imaginations run away from them. He stated that many of the testimonies on file at Yad Vashem were later proved to be inaccurate when locations and dates could not pass an expert historian's appraisal. Krakowski commented on the Jewish survivor testimony, "Many were never in the places where they claimed to have witnessed atrocities, while others relied on second-hand information given them by friends or passing strangers." [23]

Although seldom mentioned in the press, numerous eyewitnesses have reported that they did not see any evidence of genocide in the German concentration camps. One of the first to dispute reports of German genocide was Paul Rassinier. Rassinier was a French professor of history who was arrested during the war for passive resistance activities, which included helping to smuggle Jews into neutral Switzerland. Rassinier stated that although he suffered greatly during the war in the Buchenwald and Dora Concentration Camps, he never saw any evidence of homicidal gas chambers nor any program to exterminate Jews. After reading sensationalized accounts that he knew were false, Rassinier felt it was his ethical duty to tell the truth about the camps and refute the false claims being made in the world's media.

Rassinier wrote extensively about his own experiences and observations in the German camps. He also began to research the entire issue of German genocide against Jews during the war. Rassinier concluded that the death toll in the camps was far lower than alleged. He also concluded that the deaths in the camps were not caused by a German program of genocide, [24] but rather primarily by the poor conditions of the camps attributable to the economic collapse of Germany during a devastating war. Rassinier had nothing to gain personally from taking his unpopular position, and after suffering greatly in the German concentration camps, he then suffered intense persecution in postwar France for his courageous writings after the war.

Thies Christophersen was another witness who said that the alleged genocide of Jews during World War II never happened. Christophersen, a Wehrmacht private assigned to Auschwitz, supervised about 300 workers, many of them Jewish, from January to December 1944. On a number of occasions during this period he visited Birkenau where allegedly hundreds of thousands of Jews were being gassed to death. In his memoir *The Auschwitz Lie*, first published in Germany in 1973, Christophersen wrote that during the time he was at Auschwitz he did not notice the slightest evidence of mass gassings. In March 1988 at the Ernst Zündel trial in Toronto, he also successfully answered numerous pointed questions by the prosecuting attorney about his experiences at Auschwitz.

After *The Auschwitz Lie* was published, Christophersen received thousands of letters and calls. He wrote in regard to these letters and calls:

Many of those who contacted me can confirm my statements, but are afraid to do so publicly. Some of those are SS men who were brutally mistreated and even tortured in Allied captivity. I also immediately contacted those who claimed to know more about mass gassings. My experiences were precisely the same as those of French professor Paul Rassinier. I have not found any eyewitnesses. Instead, people would tell me that they knew someone who knew someone else, who talked about it. In most cases the alleged eyewitnesses had died. Other supposed eyewitnesses would quickly begin to stammer and stutter when I asked a few precise questions. Even Simon Wiesenthal had to finally admit before a Frankfurt district court that he was actually never in Auschwitz. All of the reports I have heard about are

contradictory. Everyone seemed to tell a different story about the gas chambers. They couldn't even agree about where they were supposed to have been located. This is also true of the so-called scholarly literature, which is full of contradictions.... [25]

Another eyewitness who did not see any evidence of genocide of the Jews is Dr. Wilhelm Stäglich. Dr. Stäglich, a German judge, visited Auschwitz several times during World War II as a German orderly officer of an anti-aircraft detachment. Dr. Stäglich published the following account of his visits to Auschwitz:

On none of these visits did I see gassing installations, crematoria, instruments of torture, or similar horrors. The camp gave one the impression of being well-kept and very well-organized...

The camp reminded me of the German Labor Front camp in which I served out my six-month stretch in the Labor Service, except that Auschwitz was, of course, considerably larger...None of the inmates behaved as though they were in fear of mistreatment, let alone death.

On the later point, one encounter with inmates especially sticks in my memory. As some comrades and I were standing near the camp one evening, we caught sight of a big gang of inmates returning to camp from work in the industrial plants. They were escorted by a relatively small contingent of SS-men—mostly older people—and seemed to be thoroughly undisciplined.

They talked loudly among themselves, laughing all the while. Two or three inmates dropped out of line when they spotted us, opened their flies, and made water. Although this gesture could have been interpreted as a sign of contempt for German men in uniform, the SS guards ignored it completely. Later, whenever I heard that mortal terror prevailed in the concentration camps, I had to recall this incident. That is hardly the way people who are in constant fear of death behave. [26]

Another credible eyewitness is the Austrian-born Canadian Maria Van Herwaarden, who was interned at Birkenau starting in 1942. Van Herwaarden testified at the 1988 Ernst Zündel trial that she saw nothing at Birkenau that resembled mass murder. She did testify, however, that many of the inmates at Birkenau died of typhus and some inmates committed suicide. [27] No prosecution witnesses were called during this trial because the prosecution knew of no survivors who could withstand cross examination by Zündel's defense attorney.

Conclusion

When asked in 1983 how the extermination of European Jewry took place without an order, pro-Holocaust historian Raul Hilberg replied:

What began in 1941 was a process of destruction not planned in advance, not organized centrally by any agency. There was no blueprint and no budget for destructive measures. They were taken step by step, one step at a time. Thus came about not so much a plan being carried out, but an incredible meeting of minds, a consensus—mind reading by a far-flung bureaucracy. [28]

Raul Hilberg confirmed that he said these words in his testimony at the 1985 Ernst Zündel trial in Toronto. [29] Thus, Hilberg stated that the genocide of European Jewry was not carried out by an order, a plan, a blueprint, a budget nor any agency, but rather through an incredible mind reading by a far-flung bureaucracy.

Hilberg also acknowledged in his testimony that there was no autopsy report nor scientific report showing that anyone was killed in any gas chamber anywhere in German-occupied territories.^[30] Subsequent scientific reports by American-gas-chamber expert Fred Leuchter, Austrian court-recognized expert engineer Walter Lüftl, and certified chemist Germar Rudolf all prove that Zyklon B could not have been used to exterminate humans in the alleged homicidal gas chambers at Auschwitz, Birkenau and Majdanek.

Today the evidence that the so-called Holocaust happened is based almost entirely on eyewitness testimony of "Holocaust survivors." As this article shows, such eyewitness testimony has consistently proved to be extremely unreliable.

Endnotes

[1] An excellent account of John Demjanjuk's trial is provided in Sheftel, Yoram, *Defending "Ivan the Terrible": The Conspiracy to Convict John Demjanjuk*, Washington, D.C., Regnery Publishing, Inc., 1996.

[2] "The Nazi Who Never Was," *The Washington Post*, May 10, 1981, pp. B5, B8.

[3] IMT (The "Blue Series"), Vol. 22, p. 496.

[4] "A Holocaust Belief Cleared Up," *Chicago Tribune*, April 25, 1990. Also *Globe and Mail*, Toronto, April 25, 1990. Also Hutman, Bill, "Nazis never made human-fat soap," *The Jerusalem Post - International Edition*, week ending May 5, 1990.

[5] Greene, Joshua M., *Justice at Dachau: The Trials of an American Prosecutor*, New York: Broadway Books, 2003, pp. 243, 263-266.

[6] "Clay Explains Cut in Ilse Koch Term," *The New York Times*, Sept. 24, 1948, p. 3.

[7] Interview with Lucius Clay, 1976, Official Proceeding of the George C. Marshall Research Foundation. Quoted in Weber, Mark, "Buchenwald: Legend and Reality," *The Journal of Historical Review*, Winter 1986-87, Vol. 7, No. 4, pp. 406-407. See also Smith, Arthur Lee, *Lucius D. Clay, An American Life*, New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1990, p. 301.

[8] Hoffman, Michael A., *The Great Holocaust Trial*, 3rd edition, Dresden, N.Y., Wiswell Ruffin House, 1995, pp. 45-47.

[9] *Ibid.*, pp. 56-59.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 60.

[11] *Ibid.*

[12] Kahn, Robert A., *Holocaust Denial and the Law: A Comparative Study*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004, p. 119.

[13] Wiesel, Elie, *Night Trilogy*, New York: Hill and Wang, 2008, pp. 51-52.

[14] *Ibid*, pp. 98-100.

- [15] "Author, Teacher, Witness," *Time Magazine*, March 18, 1985, p. 79.
- [16] Wiesel, Elie, *The Jews of Silence*, London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1968, p. 37.
- [17] Wiesel, Elie, *Paroles d'étranger*, Editions du Seuil, Paris, 1982, p. 86.
- [18] Ball, John C., *Air Photo Evidence*, Delta, British Columbia: Ball Resources Services Limited, 1992, p. 108.
- [19] Wiesenthal, Simon, *The Murderers Among Us*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967, pp. 37-38.
- [20] Frankl, Viktor, "Dr. Robert Schuller Interviews Viktor Frankl: How to Find Meaning In Life," *Possibilities: The Magazine of Hope*, March/April 1991, p. 10.
- [21] Pytell, Timothy, "Extreme Experience, Psychological Insight, and Holocaust Perception; Reflections of Bettelheim and Frankl," *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, Vol. 24, No. 4, Oct. 2007, p. 646.
- [22] *Jewish Social Studies*, New York: Conference on Jewish Relations, Jan. 1950, Vol. 12, pp. 65-66.
- [23] Amouyal, Barbara, "Doubts over Evidence of Camp Survivors," *Jerusalem Post*, Israel, Aug. 17, 1986, p. 1.
- [24] Rassinier, Paul, *The Holocaust Story and the Lies of Ulysses*, Costa Mesa, Cal.: The Institute for Historical Review, 1978.
- [25] Christophersen, Thies, "Reflections on Auschwitz and West German Justice," *The Journal of Historical Review*, Vol. 6, No. 1, Spring 1985, p. 118.
- [26] Stäglich, Wilhelm, *Auschwitz: A Judge Looks at the Evidence*, Institute for Historical Review, 1990, p. 293.
- [27] Kulaszka, Barbara, (ed.), *Did Six Million Really Die: Report of Evidence in the Canadian "False News" Trial of Ernst Zündel*, Toronto: Samisdar Publishers Ltd., 1992, pp. 253-255.
- [28] De Wan, George, "The Holocaust in Perspective," *Newsday*, Long Island, N.Y.: Feb. 23, 1983, Part II, p. 3.
- [29] See trial transcript, pp. 846-848. See also, Kulaszka, Barbara, (ed.), *Did Six Million Really Die: Report of Evidence in the Canadian "False News" Trial of Ernst Zündel*, Toronto: Samisdar Publishers Ltd., 1992, p. 24.
- [30] Hoffman, Michael A., *The Great Holocaust Trial*, 3rd edition, Dresden, N.Y., Wiswell Ruffin House, 1995, p. 51.

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